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SOURCE Neue Wiener Tageszeitung.

PRESS CONTROL IN THE GDR

Comment: This report summarizes an article on press control in the GDR which appeared in the conservative Vienna daily Neue Wiener Tageszeitung. According to the article, the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) has set up its own organization of correspondents to control the press activities of the ADN, (Allgemeine Deutsche Nachrichtendienst), East German news agency formerly headed by Gerhard Eisler.

The ADN news agency, an organization founded by Gerhard Eisler, propaganda chief of the GDR (German Democratic Republic), has approximately 700 correspondents and editors on its staff. To ensure political conformity, all news reports must be submitted for approval to Eisler's head censor, Georg Wilhelm Hansen, alias Willy Leitner.

If a correspondent submits a report which is not in complete accord with the party line, he is not apprised of that fact, but an entry is made in the party book on political deportment (Sittenbuch), and such a correspondent is purged sooner or later, depending on the gravity of his political faux pas. As a result of this practice, Eisler's staff has undergone two practically complete turnovers within the past 3 years, and the repeated purges have finally produced a docile and secret setup.

Nevertheless, Eisler and his men are not trusted. Distrust is openly expressed in the continued and blunt rejections of Eisler's proposals to station ADN correspondents in countries outside the GDR, notably in the people's democracies. Under existing directives, all news on foreign countries must be supplied by Tass, the Soviet news agency.

The GDR newspapers are under strict orders to print no news items other than those released by ADN. Not even local news, particularly items pertaining to accidents or crimes, may be published unless reported by ADN.

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To control Eisler, the top party leaders have set up a second network of so-called people's correspondents, completely independent of the ADN, to serve as instruments for creating a new type of press. These people's correspondents have been charged with keeping close watch on the population, from the press policy angle. Wherever irregularities crop up, whether within the party or the administration, or on the level of the people, the people's correspondents appear on the scene and publish articles patterned somewhat on the editorials of the Western press, except that they contain grave accusations against groups or individuals. Such articles invariably lead to purges. Their only mission thus clearly defined, these supercommissars and stooges of the People's Police naturally try constantly to uncover and to report acts of sabotage, treason, or hostility toward the regime.

Party leaders have stated repeatedly that these people's correspondents, headed by Rudolf Herrnstadt, chief editor of the SED's central news organ, Neues Deutschland, are more important than Eisler's press agency. (Herrnstadt, a candidate for membership in the Politburo, emigrated to the USSR when Hitler came to power, and received political training at a party school in Moscow.)

The entire GDR, with a population of 17 million, has only 22 local daily newspapers, all under the strict control of Eisler and Herrnstadt, which must print the reports of some 1,500 agents of the Propaganda Ministry. This is a clear indication of the extent of thought control exercised in the GDR. Uncensored news can be obtained only from West Berlin and from the West German radio; but listening to enemy broadcasts is also subject to severe punishment.

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